

Sounding Board Meeting #4

Summary

July 19, 2016 2:00 PM-3:30 PM
Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 5th Ave, Room 4155

Sounding Board Member Attendees:

Member Name	Interest Represented	Attendance
Liz Stenning (alternate for Leslie Smith)	Alliance for Pioneer Square	Present
Carl Leighty	Alliance for Pioneer Square	Present
Mary Bingham (alternate for Sabrina Villanueva)	Clise Properties	Present
Tim Hillis	Charlie's Produce; Freight Advisory Board	Absent
Jessica Szilag	Commute Seattle	Present
Don Blakeney	Downtown Seattle Association	Present
Cara Bertron	IDEA Space at the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda)	Absent
Hayden Lingerfelt	Hotel Representative	Absent
Steve Kennedy	Seattle Bike Advisory Board	Present
Merlin Rainwater (alternate for Kristi Rennebohm Franz)	Seattle Bike Advisory Board	Present
Ron Machón	Towne Park valet services	Absent
Greg Smith	Urban Visions Sustainable Real Estate	Absent
David Blandford	Visit Seattle/Seattle Convention and Visitors Bureau	Present

Staff Attendees:

Name	Organization
Sophie Cottle	EnviroIssues
Samantha Herman	EnviroIssues
Lauren Stensland	EnviroIssues
Jason Fialkiff	Seattle Department of Transportation
Dawn Schellenberg	Seattle Department of Transportation
Eric Tweit	Seattle Department of Transportation
Sam Woods	Seattle Department of Transportation

Note: This document is a summary of issues and actions in this meeting. It is intended to be an overview of the discussion, rather than a transcription.

Welcome and Introductions

Dawn Schellenberg, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Communications Lead, welcomed meeting attendees and introductions were made. She noted that the purpose of the meeting was to update Sounding Board members on how transportation projects are being integrated throughout Center City Seattle.

One Center City and Center City Bike Network

Eric Tweit, SDOT Transportation Planner, introduced One Center City, formerly referred to as the Center City Mobility Plan. One Center City is a 20-year long-range vision plan for transportation in downtown Seattle and in the surrounding neighborhoods and urban centers. One Center City is a partnership with multiple agencies including the City of Seattle, King County Metro, Sound Transit, and the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA). Eric said that SDOT is preparing to launch the long range planning process to the public later this year.

One Center City will integrate several existing plans such as the Seattle Transit Master Plan, Freight Master Plan, the Downtown Seattle Association Strategic Plan, and the Bike Master Plan; identify and resolve gaps and conflicts and develop a long-range vision and a strategy for near-, mid- and long-term implementation. One Center City will incorporate strategies for making improvements to these plans over time, while maintaining the common values they were founded on.

Eric noted the volume of transportation changes expected to occur in the near future, including new Sound Transit stations for Link light rail opening north and east of Seattle, the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, and the opportunity to develop a new waterfront in downtown Seattle. Eric mentioned that a 60% increase in housing units and 23% growth in jobs is expected to occur by 2035.

Some of the current transportation challenges are focused on providing mobility and access for a growing number of residents, employees and others within finite street capacity. There are currently sixty private projects that are in design, under construction, or under review in the downtown area. The expansion of the Convention Center will impact the transit tunnel in downtown Seattle. Eric noted that as early as 2018, the transit tunnel will only support rail transportation. Construction for Link light rail to east of Seattle also requires closure of the downtown transit tunnel to buses. Currently, the transit tunnel supports approximately 11,000 riders and 80 busses during peak hours. Once the tunnel closes, these busses could move to downtown streets and impact other busses, along with people who walk, ride bikes, and drive on city streets. Other large construction projects that impact multi-modal transportation include the demolition of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, the Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement tunnel, the new waterfront, and the Center City Connector Streetcar.

In the near-term, One Center City is evaluating how to reduce the number of busses that have to drive downtown to transport people, either by dropping transit riders off at transfer points north or south of downtown or bypassing downtown streets. Eric said operational changes to surface streets, such as reconfiguring existing travel lanes as dedicated transit lanes or modifying signal timing. He noted that this option provides a challenge due to the limited number of streets in the downtown corridor. Eric stated that more analysis on the near-term options for reducing busses in downtown will be shared in early 2017. Other potential near-term strategies involve the integration of the Center City Bike Network

into One Center City, including an evaluation of 4th Ave, 5th Ave, Pike St, and Pine St for future bike facilities.

Discussion

Q. [Seattle Bike Advisory Board (SBAB)] What is the origin of the name “One Center City”?

R. [Commute Seattle] The name “Center City Mobility Plan” was an acronym and didn’t encompass the goals of the project. A variety of new names were tested and “One Center City” came out of the re-branding process with Partner Agencies. One Center City is intended to communicate a unified, integrated approach for the 10+ neighborhoods that make up Center City. The new name will also help define where the center of the city is. Labeling “Downtown” as the city’s center is too limiting, but “Seattle” is too broad. Ultimately, One Center City is a transportation plan and a public realm strategy that could be used on a smaller scale in other neighborhoods of Seattle.

Q. [SBAB] When would the bus operations come out of the tunnel and onto city streets?

R. [SDOT] The exact date has not been determined, but the earliest that would occur is 2018. One Center City will not decide when the busses move from the tunnel to city streets. Instead, it will inform the strategy for transportation following the shifting off buses onto streets and help manage our streets so that all modes are served. Internal work has already begun to figure out the impact this shift will cause. This work needs to begin now so that King County Metro can start planning their operations effectively.

Network Progress

Sam Woods, SDOT Project Manager, briefed Sounding Board members on the overall progress of the Center City Bike Network. Based on the topography, origins and destinations and demand the network includes four north-south corridors and several east-west corridors link to neighborhoods outside of the Center City. Sam noted that SDOT is evaluating 4th Ave, 5th Ave, Pike St, and Pine St as possible streets to have protected bike lanes installed. Dawn noted that the public has said that these four connections are of high importance to evaluate.

Eric Tweit presented the project schedule for One Center City, noting that the team is looking at the project components that could be advanced in the next couple of years, while continuing to coordinate with the broader goals of One Center City. The draft plan will be available in summer 2017, with a final plan available at the end of 2017.

Discussion

C. [DSA] I would recommend that you consult with the business owners on Capitol Hill. I have heard from various stakeholders, specifically retail business owners, in the Capitol Hill neighborhood who feel that they have not been consulted about where future protected bike lanes should be. Some business owners are unhappy with the protected bike lane on Broadway because it limits visibility and access to the store and there are loading and unloading concerns. Generally speaking, the concern is that there will be multiple uses on one corridor and it will be too crowded. Does the connection to Capitol Hill involve an evaluation of Olive St and Union St?

R. [SDOT] Thank you for sharing this perspective, it is helpful to know moving forward.

Q. [Alliance for Pioneer Square] Will the steepness of Yesler Way affect the decision to place a protected bicycle lane on this street?

R. [SDOT] There are some existing protected bicycle lanes on Yesler Way, and connecting these will be studied. The City is interested in the guidelines for integrating street cars and bicycle facilities. It is a design challenge to accommodate facilities for people who ride bikes where the street car turns. Dearborn St is nearing 100% design and the contract is to be bid on soon. SDOT is still evaluating potential protected bicycle lane connections to Chinatown/International District.

Q. [SBAB] The Sounding Board has not focused on studying Jackson St as an east to west connection. There is a large volume of people riding bikes on Jackson St. People riding their bikes on the outside of the street car creates a safety hazard. Jackson St may be a great place to install a protected bike lane, due to the traffic congestion and the location of the street car on that corridor.

R. [SDOT] Jackson St was evaluated for a protected bike lane when the street car was being developed.

C. [SBAB] A protected bike lane on Jackson St was a large missed opportunity. For people who travel in that area, Jackson St is the preferred route to ride a bike on.

C. [DSA] King St is used frequently by people who ride bikes, as it is a quieter street than Jackson St.

R. [SDOT] SDOT is studying King St for a neighborhood greenway. It would involve more work to cross Rainier Ave, which is not signaled for bicycles and has steeper grades.

C. [Commute Seattle] Rolling the Center City Bike Network into One Center City makes sense because the various modal options on city streets are part of the whole transportation system. Instead of advocating for certain streets, how do we re-frame the process so that we evaluate all streets and the characteristics that could or could not support a future protected bike lane? Within that framework, we could clearly lay out the information for decision makers.

C. [Commute Seattle] It is important to talk about the characteristics of individual streets and discuss what makes a street good or bad to ride a bike on. We should devise guidelines on how the quality of a street is evaluated, such as grade, ability to connect to other bike facilities, and other tradeoffs. When talking to people about this project, I think that the broader vision needs to be explained because it doesn't make sense to talk about bike lanes in isolation of other modes of transportation. We need to build trust with people so that we can build to a standard that works for different types of people, in order to move people throughout the city.

R. [SDOT] With busses, there are known parameters about how far people are willing to walk. People who ride bikes are sensitive to grades and safety issues. One Center City is about taking those nuances and blending them together. Currently, SDOT is trying to collect information. When the near-term strategies are released, we need to be able to explain what considerations were used and why we are putting forth the recommendations that we do.

C. [DSA] It is important to communicate similar messages to various stakeholders, in order to avoid confusion and to build trust with the community.

R. [SDOT] It will be important to communicate how routes are decided upon and the tradeoffs with individual routes.

C. [Visit Seattle] The Pike/Pine corridor is at a competitive disadvantage and could potentially be at risk of losing business. It will be interesting when the Convention Center is expanded and there is an increased amount of people in that corridor.

Q. [Seattle Bike Advisory Board] Will the draft plan include identified corridors for protected bike lanes?

R. [SDOT] It is possible that the draft plan will include identified corridors for protected bike lanes. The goal is to have the general bike network defined by the first quarter of 2017, in order to integrate the network plan with One Center City and identify the corridors that have the greatest opportunities.

Q. [SBAB] There was great public outreach last summer. Will there be public outreach before the One Center City recommendations are released? What is the public process for the Center City Bike Network now?

R. [SDOT] There will be a constant integration of Center City Bike Network and One Center City, and we are working on the specifics of how to best integrate the outreach as well.

C. [Commute Seattle] Outreach for One Center City would include outreach for the Center City Bike Network. It wouldn't make sense to do outreach for a single mode at this point, we need to look at the complete picture and how everything fits together.

Public Engagement

Eric explained the public engagement efforts for One Center City, stating that engaging as many people as possible is one of the broader outreach goals. One Center City will have an advisory committee, which will consist of about 30-35 members, representing diverse interests in order to reflect the diversity of the city. 100 invitations were sent to potential advisory committee members and 30 people have been selected thus far. The advisory committee kick-off meeting will be held at the end of August. Eric noted that he anticipates the advisory committee will meet to begin talking about strategies and the long-range plan this fall. Other outreach strategies for One Center City will involve briefings with stakeholder groups, selected group interviews, and on-going activities to help the community stay engaged and provide continual input throughout the project. Eric welcomed Sounding Board members to share outreach ideas with the team.

2nd Ave Safety Project

Sam gave a brief update on the status of the 2nd Ave Safety Project, noting that the contractor will be selected in the next few months. The project will include three new traffic signals, traffic signal updates, and a two-way protected bike lane, on the east side of 2nd Ave extending north from Pike Street to Denny Way. Planter boxes will be used to separate people biking from people driving. The traffic lane adjacent to the protected bike lane will be a floating parking lane, with several left turn pockets

throughout the corridor. In some areas along the corridor, a leaning rail with a footrest will be installed in the protected bike lane to encourage compliance with traffic signals.

Dawn talked about the community outreach that was done for the 2nd Ave Safety Project, noting that there were 32 briefings with businesses, 500 flyers distributed to residents and businesses on the corridor, 9,000 mailers sent to project neighbors, walkshops, and door-to-door outreach. Dawn stated that the 2nd Ave Safety Project has been well received by the community.

Discussion

Q. [Seattle Bike Advisory Board] How does one get across the street when at the northern end of Denny Way?

R. [SDOT] There are sharrows on 2nd Ave north of Denny Way. There will be a bike box for people riding their bikes southbound. People biking in the northbound direction will use the pedestrian signal to cross.

9th Ave Protected Bike Lane

Jason Fialkoff, SDOT, presented the 9th Ave protected bike lane expansion project to Sounding Board members. During his presentation, Jason noted that the proposed protected bike lane will include a 3-foot painted buffer and consolidation of parking to one side of the street. The parking lane will act as the buffer to the protected bike lane.

Jason stated that the South Lake Union area is made up of 45% single occupancy commuters, 26% transit riders, and 15% non-motorized commuters. South Lake Union is growing rapidly and the 9th Ave N protected bike lane is being coordinated with existing and future construction and projected growth in the area. For this project, SDOT is proposing a phased approach for constructing the projected bike lane. Jason said that the Denny Substation project will begin in July 2016 and end at the end of the year in 2017. One feature of the Denny Substation project are temporary utility poles on several curbs. Jason noted that it is difficult to install a protected bike lane with utility poles in those locations. As the Denny Substation project ends, the protected bike lane on 9th Ave N will be extended.

Dawn noted that 9th Ave N will connect to the Westlake Cycle Track, allowing a connection to other neighborhoods. Dawn mentioned that the outreach process for 9th Ave N protected bike lane may differ from the outreach performed on the 2nd Ave Safety Project.

Discussion

Q. [Seattle Bike Advisory Board] Has there been blow-back about the protected bike lane on 9th Ave N?

R. [SDOT] There has not been a significant amount of outreach done for this project yet. Once we start performing more robust outreach, I imagine there will be some push back from stakeholders. The Parks Department is somewhat concerned because some parking spaces will be removed from inside Denny Park.

Education and Encouragement

Dawn informed Sounding Board members that short videos were created as part of the outreach strategy for the Center City Bike Network. The videos represent various Center City stakeholders. Dawn

will send Sounding Board members the links to the videos. Dawn noted that future outreach activities may include reoccurring blog posts, tweets, and creating a bicycle marketing campaign to encourage bike ridership. She noted that SDOT is in the process of determining what the market and key messages will be for the campaign.

Jessica Szlag, Commute Seattle, introduced the Bike Friendly Business program, which is a partnership between Commute Seattle and Cascade Bicycle Club. Bike Friendly Businesses are featured on a citywide map and have the ability to receive discounts on bike amenities, such as bicycle racks. The goal of the program is to connect businesses that promote bike friendliness and be able to point people who bike to businesses within this program.

Open Discussion

Q. [SBAB] What will be the involvement of the Sounding Board after the draft recommendations and plan are shared?

R. [SDOT] As Center City Bike Network integrates into One Center City and the draft recommendations are ready to be shared, we'd like to hold another Sounding Board meeting before we share that information with the One Center City advisory committee.

Q. [SBAB] What is the analysis specifically evaluating?

R. [SDOT] The analytical tool calculates traffic operations and how cars, busses, bikes, and pedestrians are impacted if you adjust the timing of traffic signals or lane configurations. The tool can provide an estimated level of service for someone who busses, rides a bike, walks, or drives.

C. [SBAB] If there was a connection from Capitol Hill to the waterfront in downtown, there would be potential to have an increase in recreational bike ridership. What the SBAB is hoping for is a network that is going to drive a fundamental change in who rides a bike.

R. [SDOT] The analytical tool is only one method being used to answer the question, "How long will my trip be delayed?" In either scenario, whether the tool is modeling for bikes or vehicles, it cannot tell you how many people are attracted to one corridor over another.

C. [Commute Seattle] If the goals for individual modes of transportation were outlined clearly, then we would be able to say that we need to build a certain kind of facility to accommodate the projected percentage increase in ridership. The overall goal is to accommodate the projected future capacity.

R. [SDOT] The Center City Bike Network will be implemented in phases. When each additional phase is installed, it draws greater ridership. As the network continues to grow, we hope that there will be an increase in bike ridership throughout the city.

Next Steps

The next Sounding Board meeting is expected to take place in late 2016, where members will learn about the results of the draft recommendations for near-term mobility strategies, as well as an overall update on the network progress.